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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

Pragmatism. D. L. MURRAY. New York: Dodge Publishing Company. 1912. Pp. x + 78.

This small volume is intended as an elementary introduction to pragmatism. It may be said at once that Mr. Murray has done with unusual success the thing that he set out to do, and that, too, with commendable brevity. This does not mean, of course, that every pragmatist would approve of all that is here set down. But it should be borne in mind that the author of this most excellent little volume is a disciple of Dr. Schiller. A humanistic pragmatist would, I presume, be the last to deny that he might for this very reason be led to *select* from Dewey and James what best served his purposes.

A singular interest is brought to the volume by a rather unique introduction by Dr. Schiller himself, who appears as sponsor for the author in his maiden attempt. While pointing out the need of such a volume as here appears and the peculiar fitness of Mr. Murray, by reason of his youth, training at Oxford, etc., to write the same, he delivers himself somewhat incidentally of the following characteristic paragraph, which, I think, deserves as wide a circulation as it may find.

"Mr. Murray has (like myself) enjoyed the advantage of a severely intellectualistic training in the classical philosophy of Oxford University, and in its premier college, Balliol. The aim of this training is to instill into the best minds the country produces the adamant conviction that philosophy has made no progress since Aristotle. It costs about £50,000 a year, but on the whole it is singularly successful. Its effect upon capable minds possessed of common sense is to produce that contempt for the pure intellect which distinguishes the British nation from all others, and ensures the practical success of administrators selected by an examination so gloriously irrelevant to their duties that, since the lamentable demise of the Chinese system, it may boast to be the most antiquated in the world."

It is a mistake, according to Mr. Murray, to look upon pragmatism "as a parochial eccentricity, as a specific Americanism." On the contrary, "it has come into being by a *convergence* of distinct lines of thought pursued in different countries by different thinkers." He undertakes to single out the sources of pragmatism. It owes its being to the changed conceptions of scientific procedure consequent upon the increase in knowledge; the advent of Darwinism, which made possible the logical theories of Dewey; the internal evolution of philosophic reflection, set forth in the writings of Schiller; the inadequacy of formal logic, pointed out by A. Sidgwick, among others; the primacy of faith in the solution of religious problems long practised by the religious, but first adequately treated by James; and finally, most fertile of all, the new psychology, *i. e.*, the introduction of biological and voluntaristic principles into psychology.

Fundamentally pragmatism is a "collective name for the most modern solution of puzzles which have impeded philosophical progress from time immemorial, and it has arisen naturally in the course of philosophical

reflection." Not until William James substituted his "stream of experience" for the disjointed *self* of Hume was it possible for philosophy to extricate herself from the difficulties consequent upon the acceptance of atomistic psychology. Then all became clear; Kant's labors were supererogatory. The need of a transcendental factor of union, based upon the psychology of Hume, fell away. But even Hume's stress upon the discrete character of our experience was not without its advantages. Here was abundant evidence of the selective character of thinking. Indeed, "the volitional contribution is all-pervasive in our thinking" and may therefore be looked upon as legitimate. Thus arises the doctrine of voluntary postulation which affords a new compromise between the old schools of thought far superior to that offered by Kant, because based upon a truer psychology. But it must not be overlooked, as is sometimes done, that this doctrine involves verification, *i. e.*, any postulate may become either prejudice or axiom. That depends upon future experience. It is mere chance that James first presented this doctrine to a theological audience;¹ it is as applicable in science as in religion. The doctrine met a crying need. "For absolute truth has become a chimera, self-evidence an illusion, and intuition untrustworthy." It was either scepticism or relativism; pragmatism frankly takes the latter. For after all, "in real life thought starts in perplexities," as Dewey points out, and all judgments are truth claims, but subject to future validation. Mr. Murray then points out the failure of old definitions of truth.

As to the arbitrary character of the pragmatic method of testing truths which, it is claimed by some, would allow the pragmatist "to assert the truth of every idea which seems to us pretty or pleasant," he says: "The very term 'useful' was chosen by pragmatists as a protest against the common philosophic license of alleging 'truths' which could never be applied or tested, and were supposed to be none the worse for being 'useless.' It is clear both that such 'truths' must be a monopoly of intellectualism, and also that they do allow every man to believe whatever he wishes provided only that he boldly claims 'self-evidence' for his idiosyncrasy." I presume such a statement is justified considering the success with which pragmatists have met in getting their doctrine understood.

As the book purports to be an introduction to pragmatism, a doctrine associated with the name of Dewey, it may not be amiss to call attention to his own opinions in so far as they are opposed to humanism in at least one respect, bearing upon the last chapter, Thought and Life. Fortunately it can be done in his own words.² "According to the latter view (humanism) the personal appears to be ultimate and unanalyzable, the metaphysically real. Associations with idealism, moreover, give it an idealistic turn, a translation, in effect, of monistic intellectualistic idealism into a pluralistic, voluntaristic idealism. But according to the former (his own

¹ The essay "The Will to Believe" was read before the Philosophical Clubs of Yale and Brown Universities. These clubs hardly constitute *theological* audiences.

² This JOURNAL, Vol. V., page 97.

views), the personal is not ultimate, but it is to be analyzed and defined biologically on its genetic side, ethically on its prospective and functioning side." This, I think, represents the views of the majority of pragmatists in America, those under the influence of James as well as Dewey. There is, of course, much ground for associating what seems to be a recrudescence of an ancient Persian doctrine as to the importance of personal effort in cosmic evolution with the name of James, but even he seems to have stressed it less and less.

Humanistic pragmatism, if I may be allowed the general criticism, seems to me to be under the sway of what may be called the *genetic* fallacy. The place of *selection* in psychology is important. Recognition of this fact helps us to understand what was once obscure, the true nature of thinking. But it does not follow that it can hold the central place in a metaphysics that Mr. Murray would give it.

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JOURNALS AND NEW BOOKS

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY. July, 1913. *The Rôle of Kinæsthesia in the Perception of Rhythm* (pp. 305-359): CHRISTIAN A. RUCKMICH.—An experimental investigation into the problem of rhythm with a great deal of introspective analysis. It was concluded that kinæsthesia is essential in the perception of rhythm, but when perceived, rhythm can go on without kinæsthesia. *Luther's Early Development in the Light of Psychoanalysis* (pp. 360-377): PRESERVED SMITH.—An analysis of the mental life of Luther, indicating terrific mental struggle and anguish. An analysis of his temptations and suggested reasons for his religious attitudes. *The Fluctuation of Liminal Visual Stimuli of Point Area* (pp. 378-409): C. E. FERREE.—A discussion of the fluctuation phenomena, followed by experimental data, from which the conclusion is drawn that fluctuations to minimal visual stimuli are due to the adaptation and recovery of the sense organ. *The Characteristic Form Assumed by Dreams* (pp. 410-413): ELLIOT PARK FROST.—Dreams seem to be rhythmic or spasmodic. Energy from one dream phase carries over to another and breaks out rather suddenly with the corresponding physiological accompaniments. *Suppression and Substitution as a Factor in Sex Differences* (pp. 414-425): M. E. HAGGERTY and E. J. KEMPF.—A series of association tests were given to men and women. The women showed a tendency to suppress associations that might be embarrassing. *Improvement in a Practise Experiment Under School Conditions* (pp. 426-428): M. E. DONOVAN and EDWARD L. THORNDIKE.—Additional data that support the point made in regard to practise in the *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. XIX., page 383. *Discussion: The Method of Examination* (pp. 429-440): E. B. TITCHENER. *Professor Yuzero Matora* (pp. 440-443). *Fifth Report of the Polish Psychological Society* (p. 444). *Con-*